

CHILD'S CAR SEAT CUSHIONTechnical Field

The present invention relates, generally, to a method of protecting a child in a car seat and, to 5 cushions for children's car seats to provide improved support and security for the child, especially for infants and newborns.

Background of the Invention

Many states have laws requiring that children be restrained in a car seat while in an operating vehicle. 10 Child car seat manufacturers have developed two different standard types and sizes of car seats to assure parents that not only are their children safe but that they are compliant with the state laws. The first standard type car seat is the infant carrier 15 which is typically used with infants who weigh up to 20 pounds. The second standard type car seat is the front facing toddler support which is for toddlers who weigh from 20 pounds to 50 pounds. Unfortunately, the

toddler support car seat due to its larger dimensions cannot accommodate newborns or very small infants, including premature infants and prematurely discharged newborns. The infant carrier, which is smaller than 5 the toddler support, is also often too large to accommodate newborn or premature infants.

Infants who are too small to properly fit in a car seat can flop back and forth while in the car seat. Newborn or prematurely born infants, when placed into a 10 car seat, are commonly forced into a seated orientation in which either the head is slumped or slouched or their entire bodies are slouched over since their bodies are not large enough to cover the surface area of the car seat. This not only affects the comfort of 15 the child but also his or her safety and health.

Much of the surface area of the car seat between the body of the infant and the side walls of the car seat is left unoccupied. Even when the infant is secured by the safety belt which is part of the car 20 seat structure, the infant is not supported at its lateral sides of its body and at its head and neck by the seat belt. The safety of the infant may be compromised in this situation.

Moreover, infants can be uncomfortable in such a slumped or slouched over orientation. A slumped or slouched over orientation can negatively affect the infant's breathing. Studies have shown that premature 5 infants have significant decreases in oxygen saturation while restrained in a car seat with 30% experiencing hypoxia, bradycardia, sleep apnea or some combination of those conditions.

The decrease in oxygen saturation is directly 10 related to the degree to which the infant is slumped or slouched over in the car seat; the more slumped or slouched over is the infant, the greater the physiological risk, the less slumped or slouched over is the infant, the lesser the physiological risk. This 15 occurs because the more slumped or slouched over the infant is, either forward or sideways, the greater the risk of airway obstruction in the infant.

Infant slouching or slumping occurs for two basic reasons, low birth weight infants cannot resist the gravitational effects if their bodies are in a too upright position, and standard sized child car seats do not provide the necessary support and orientation for these infants to prevent the gravitational effects. These effects can cause slouching or slumping since

most infants do not have the physical maturation or strength of the back to maintain an upright position.

Accordingly, there exists a need for a child's car seat cushion that helps to support the child in a physiologically and physically beneficial orientation when the child is too small for the car seat by minimizing or preventing the child from slouching or slumping. There also exists a need for a child's car seat cushion that helps to secure the child who is too small to fit in standard size car seats in such car seats in order to help protect the child from injury during a vehicle crash event or sudden vehicle movement.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides a child's car seat cushion that satisfies the aforementioned needs.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a cushion that inserts into any standard child's car seat.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a cushion that will support and help to secure a child, but especially newborns and infants while in a car seat.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a car seat cushion that supports the child on the lateral sides of the child's body such that the child is properly positioned and secured while in the car seat and the space between the child's body and head and the side walls of the car seat is reduced to a minimum or eliminated altogether to prevent slumping over or slouching over of the child while in the car seat.

10 It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a car seat cushion that is manufactured from cushioning media to provide comfort, support and security to the child while in the car seat.

15 Accordingly, the present invention relates to a child's car seat cushion placed into a car seat to secure a child who is too small for the car seat in a comfortable orientation and which also helps to protect the child from injury and helps to prevent airway obstruction due to a slumped or slouched over orientation.

20 A method of helping to secure an infant in a child's car seat and to prevent slouching of the infant in the car seat includes the step of placing a cushion having a unitary tube shaped structure into the car

seat and placing an infant into the car seat where the tube-shaped structure has a U-shape including two legs with two axial ends and a base portion where the two legs are joined together. The base portion is located  
5 at the top of the back surface of the car seat and the two axial ends of the legs are located at the free edge of the seat surface of the car seat. The cushion legs engage the side walls of the car seat. The infant is placed into the car seat so that the infant is  
10 surrounded and engages the cushion base portion and legs to reduce the surface area of the car seat for the infant to occupy in order to help secure the infant in the car seat and to prevent slouching of the infant in the car seat.

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Brief Description of the Drawings

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The foregoing and other features of the present invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art to which the present invention relates upon reading the following description with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a child's car seat with a cushion according to the present invention shown inserted in a child's car seat with an infant;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the child's car seat cushion according to the present invention shown in Figure 1;

5 Fig. 3 is a perspective view of a second embodiment of the child's car seat cushion according to the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a partial cross-sectional view of a third embodiment of the child's car seat cushion according to the present invention;

10 Fig. 5 is a partial cross-sectional view of a fourth embodiment of the child's car seat cushion according to the present invention;

Fig. 6 is a partial cross-sectional view of a fifth embodiment of the child's car seat cushion  
15 according to the present invention;

Fig. 7 is a view of two child's car seat cushions according to Fig. 2 placed side by side;

Fig. 8 is a view of two child's car seat cushions according to Fig. 3 placed side by side;

20 Fig. 9 is a view of the child's car seat cushion according to Fig. 2 in an elongated condition;

Fig. 10 is a view identical to Fig. 1 except two child's car seat cushions according to Fig. 2 are shown

inserted side by side in a child's car seat with an infant;

Fig. 11 is a cross-sectional view of the child's car seat cushion taken along section line 11-11 in Fig. 5 2;

Fig. 12 is a schematic illustration of a sixth embodiment of the child's car seat cushion according to the present invention;

Fig. 13 is a schematic illustration of a seventh 10 embodiment of the child's car seat cushion according to the present invention;

Fig. 14 is a schematic illustration of an infant with two child's car seat cushions according to the present invention including the cushion of Fig. 13;

15 Fig. 15 is a schematic illustration of three child's car seat cushions according to the present invention including an eighth embodiment of a child's car seat cushion;

Fig. 16 is a schematic illustration of an infant 20 positioned with the three child's car seat cushions of Fig. 15;

Fig. 17 is a schematic illustration of three child's car seat cushions according to the present

invention including a ninth embodiment of a child's car seat cushion;

Fig. 18 is a schematic illustration of an infant positioned with the three child's car seat cushions of Fig. 17;

Fig. 19 is a schematic illustration of an infant positioned with the cushion according to a tenth embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 20 is a schematic illustration of an infant positioned in a car seat with the cushion of Fig. 19.

#### Detailed Description of the Invention

The present invention is a child's car seat cushion 10 shown in Fig. 1 placed in a car seat 100 with an infant. The cushion 10 helps to secure and support the infant who does not fit into standard sized car seats. The car seat 100 is illustrated in a schematic view and can have any similar construction.

The car seat 100 includes a seat surface 110 and a back surface 120 extending upwardly from the edge of the seat surface 100. The car seat 100 also includes two lateral side walls 130, 140 between which the seat surface 110 and the back surface 120 extend.

The cushion 10 is an elongate flexible, unitary tube-shaped structure with two axial ends 12, 14.

(Fig. 9) For insertion into the car seat 100, the cushion 10 is manually bent at approximately the middle of its length to form an upside down "U" shape. (Fig.

2) The upside down U-shaped cushion 10 has two legs 5 16, 18 extending an approximately equal distance. The two legs 16, 18 extend from a base portion 20 where the two legs are joined together.

The cushion 10 is placed onto the car seat 100

(Fig. 1) adjacent the seat surface 110 and back surface 10 120 of the car seat so the base portion 20 of the cushion 10 is located at the top of the back surface of the car seat above the infant's head.. The two axial ends 12, 14 of the upside down U-shaped cushion 10 are located at the free edge of the seat surface 110 of the 15 car seat 100 where the infant's legs and/or feet are located when the infant is seated in the car seat.

The two legs 16, 18 of the cushion 10 are pushed into a recess 150 formed at the intersection of the seat surface 110 and back surface 120 of the car seat 20 100. The infant is located in the car seat 100 so that the head of the infant contacts and is surrounded by the base portion 20 of the cushion 10 and the entire lateral sides of the body of the infant contact the two

legs 16, 18 of the cushion. The cushion 10 conforms to the body shape of the infant.

The cushion 10 is preferably made of a tube of French terry cloth material filled with batting.

5 (Fig. 11.) French terry cloth material consists of 80% cotton/20% polyester fiber. The batting is preferably a flame retardant 100% polyester material. Instead of French terry cloth, the material of the cushion 10 may be any suitable equivalent textile material such as 10 cotton, polyester, wool, fleece, or a combination thereof. Instead of batting, the cushion 10 can be filled with foam or gel or other suitable material or can be inflated with water or air in a vinyl casing and covered with a textile material. Also, the batting may 15 be of a suitable material other than polyester materials.

The cushion 10 is sewn together lengthwise along a seam 22. The seam 22 is preferably located on the underside of the cushion 10 when placed in the car seat 20 100. Instead of sewing, the material can be joined together by for example, a zipper, snaps, buttons, gluing or by a Velcro<sup>TM</sup> type hook-and-eye closure.

The material of the cushion 10 may alternately be made of a cushioning media such as a flame retardant

foam rubber or foam vinyl covered with a suitable washable skin made of hypoallergenic plastic, nylon, polyurethane or any suitable material. The cushioning media may have skin manufactured with a nylon facing  
5 and a backing of a 65%/35% combination of polyester and cotton. The foam used in the manufacture of the cushion can also be a particular type of foam known as "memory foam". Memory foam temporarily retains the shape of an object which is pressed onto it. For  
10 example, memory foam can temporarily retain the body shape of an infant who is placed on the foam. The cushion 10 is washable. The cushion 10 reduces the surface area of the seat surface 110 and back surface 120 on the car seat 100 on which the infant is placed  
15 and provides an additional wall of cushion material.

As can be seen in Figs. 7 and 10, a second cushion 10x can also be placed in the car seat 100 on the inside of the cushion 10.. The second cushion 10x is identical to the cushion 10 except that the second  
20 cushion 10x is smaller in thickness and in length than the cushion 10. The second cushion 10x can also be the same size as the cushion 10. The second cushion 10x is be placed side by side next to the cushion 10 in the car seat 100 when the infant is very small in size, for

example, when the infant is a new born or a premature infant and does not properly fit into the car seat 100. Similarly, when the infant grows to a larger size, the second cushion 10x is removed from the car seat,  
5 leaving only the cushion 10 which increases the surface area of the car seat upon which the infant can lie.

In the embodiment according to Fig. 9, the cushion 10 is approximately 56 inches in length. The diameter of a cross-section of the cushion 10 is  
10 approximately 4 inches. (Fig. 11) It is to be understood that the cushion 10 can have various dimensions according to the desire of the manufacturer. For example, the cushion 10 can range in diameter from approximately 1-6 inches. Also, the length of the  
15 cushion 10 can range from approximately 40-90 inches.

In another embodiment of the cushion 10, the cushion 10 is detachable from itself and separated into two pieces at the midpoint of its length by a Velcro<sup>TM</sup> type hook-and-eye closure or other releasable closure.

20 Fig. 3 illustrates a second embodiment of the invention. The cushion 10a is similar to the cushion 10 shown in Figs. 1-2, and parts that are the same or similar are given the same reference numerals with the suffix "a" attached. In this embodiment, the cushion

10a is pre-formed into an upside down U-shape and includes an pre-formed elbow shaped bend 24 in each of the legs 16a, 18a at a location which is at approximately half of the length of the legs. The pre-formed angle  $\theta$  of the bend is approximately  $105^\circ$  before insertion into the car seat 100.  $105^\circ$  is approximately equal to the standard cradle angle formed by the intersection of the seat surface 110 and back surface 120 of the car seat 100. (Fig. 1). In another embodiment of the cushion 10a (not shown), each of the legs of the cushion 10a has a reduced thickness/diameter relative to the thickness/diameter of the remainder of the cushion. The reduced thickness portions of the cushion are located relative to the child along a distance approximately between the child's temples and chin. The reduced thickness portions allow for a larger empty space between the child's temples and chin and the cushion 10a in order to help the child to breathe easier if, for example, the child turns its head in the left or right directions. The top of the child's head is in contact with the base of the cushion 10a to provide support to the child's head to help the child's head to face in a forward direction. Similar to the cushion 10, cushion

10a contacts the entire lateral sides of the infant and conforms to the shape of the infant.

Although the cushion 10a is pre-formed, the cushion is also flexible. The cushion 10a is pre-formed by cutting out a fabric pattern which includes the shape of the bend 24, sewing the fabric together and stuffing the cushion with batting.

10 Although the cushion 10a is not shown placed into a car seat, the placement of cushion 10a is similar to the placement of the cushion 10 according to Fig.1.

When the cushion 10a (Fig. 3) is placed in the car seat 100, the location of the elbow shaped bend 24 is aligned over the recess 150 in the car seat. The cushion 10a conforms to the contours of the car seat 100 and the bend angle  $\theta$  conforms to the standard cradle angle of the car seat.

15 The pre-formed upside down U-shaped cushion 10a with elbow bend 24 eliminates the steps of bending the cushion into an upside-down U-shape before insertion into the car seat 100 and eliminates the step of pushing the legs 16a, 18a into the recess 150 formed at the intersection of the seat surface 110 and back surface 120 of the car seat.

A second cushion 10ax can also be placed in the car seat 100 on the inside of the cushion 10a. (Fig. 8). The second cushion 10ax is identical to the cushion 10. The second cushion 10ax can also be smaller in length and thickness than the cushion 10a. The second cushion 10ax can be placed side by side next to the cushion 10a in the car seat 100 when the infant is very small in size, for example, when the infant is a new born or a premature infant and does not properly fit into the car seat 100. Similarly, when the infant grows to a larger size, the second cushion 10ax is removed from the car seat, leaving only the cushion 10a which increases the surface area of the car seat upon which the infant can lie.

It is to be understood that the standard cradle angle of the schematically illustrated car seat is only an approximation. If the standard cradle angle is different than the 105° illustrated herein, the pre-formed bend angle  $\theta$  of the cushion 10a can also be modified from 105° to match approximately to the standard cradle angle without departing from the scope of the invention. For example, car seat cradle angles may vary according to manufacture in extreme cases from

between  $90^\circ$ - $135^\circ$ . Therefore, the cushion 10a can also have a bend angle  $\theta$  from between  $90^\circ$ - $135^\circ$ .

Fig. 4 illustrates a third embodiment of the invention. The cushion 10b is similar to the cushion 10 Figs. 1-2, and parts that are the same or similar are given the same reference numerals with the suffix "b" attached.

In this embodiment, the cushion 10b includes an audible sound producing device, namely a battery operated music box 26, located in the axial end 12b of the leg 16b. The music box 26 plays chime lullabies or similar music. The music box 26 is activated by a care giver manually depressing a button 27 sewn onto the outside of the material of the leg 16b. Optionally, the button 27 can be depressed so easily that the infant's leg can activate the music box if it kicks the button when the infant is placed into the car seat 100.

The music box 26 can also be self-activating. A self-activating music box 26 has no depressible buttons and activates instead in response to an impact force exceeding a predetermined impact force threshold, such as in response to the infant kicking the leg 16b of the cushion 10b. Alternately, the music box 26 can be located in the opposite axial end 14b of the other leg

18b or a music box may be located in each axial end of the cushion 10b. The music box 26 is only schematically illustrated since many different configurations of music boxes can be employed.

5       The music box 26 can also be activated using a remote control device (not illustrated). The remote control device advantageously enables activation of the music box 26 from a remote location a distance from the cushion 10b. For example, a caregiver located in another room from the music box 26, may activate the music box 26 using the remote control device if the infant seated with the cushion 10b is fussy or irritated in the hope that the music from the music box 26 will soothe the infant. Another example is that a 10      caregiver can activate the music box 26 without much distraction while driving a vehicle and the infant is seated with the cushion 10b in the vehicle behind the caregiver.

15       The music box 26 is insulated by the batting or other cushioning media in the cushion 10b so that the infant cannot accidentally hurt his or her leg by a sudden movement into the cushion into area where the music box is located. On the other hand, the music box 20      26 is loud enough to be heard by the infant through the

insulation. Preferably, the axial end 12b of the leg 16b can be opened to remove the music box 26 in order to change batteries or to wash the cushion 10b.

The opening in the axial end 12b is releasably closed by, for example, a zipper, snaps, buttons or a Velcro™ type hook-and-eye closure. Alternatively, the music box 26 can also be permanently fixed inside the cushion 10b in that the cushion has no opening. The music box 26 can also have a waterproof structure.

Fig. 5 illustrates a fourth embodiment of the invention. The cushion 10c is similar to the cushion 10 Figs. 1-2, and parts that are the same or similar are given the same reference numerals with the suffix "c" attached. In this embodiment, instead of the music box 26, the cushion 10c includes a rattle 28. The rattle 28 is located in the axial end 12c of the leg 16c of the cushion 10c. Alternatively, the rattle 28 may be located in the opposite axial end 14c of the leg 18c or a rattle may be located in each axial end of the cushion 10c. The rattle 28 is only schematically illustrated as many different configurations of rattles may be employed.

The rattle 28 is a waterproof plastic structure containing small beads which make an audible rattling

sound when shaken or suddenly jarred such as when the leg of the infant kicks the cushion 10c where the rattle is located. Like the music box 26, the rattle 28 is also insulated by the batting or other cushioning media to prevent injury to the infant upon the infant suddenly kicking the cushion 10c. On the other hand, the rattle 28 is loud enough to be heard by the infant through the insulation.

Fig. 6 illustrates a fifth embodiment of the invention. The cushion 10d is similar to the cushion 10 Fig. 1-2, and parts that are the same or similar are given the same reference numerals with the suffix "d" attached. In this embodiment, instead of the music box 26 or rattle 28, the cushion 10d includes jingle bells 30 which are only schematically illustrated in Fig. 6.

The jingle bells 30 make an audible jingling sound when moved. The jingle bells 30 are located in the leg of the cushion in a waterproof plastic container or other container. The waterproof container permits washing of the cushion 10d without water contacting the jingle bells 30 to prevent the jingle bells from rusting. The jingle bells 30 can each be located in either or both axial ends of the cushion 10d.

The cushion 10 (Fig.1) advantageously reduces the space available on the seat surface 110 and back surface 120 of the car seat 100 for placement of an infant. The cushion 10 prevents slouching or slumping over of an infant and helps to better secure the infant in the case of a vehicle crash event than the car seat 100 by itself without the cushion. Also, as illustrated in Fig. 10, if the second cushion 10x is inserted side by side next to the first cushion 10 into the car seat 100, the seat surface 110 and back surface 120 of the cushion is advantageously reduced even more to accommodate a smaller size infant.

Although the cushion 10 is shown for insertion into a car seat 100 in Figs. 1-11, the infant cushion can be advantageously inserted horizontally in a crib (not shown) to provide a secure cushioned surrounding in which the infant cannot roll out of the confines of the cushion and into the crib slots. Instead of a crib, the infant cushion 10 can also be placed onto a bassinet, the floor, a baby swing, on top of an adult bed, into a stroller or baby buggy (not shown).

Fig. 12 illustrates a sixth embodiment of the invention. The cushion 10e is similar to the cushion 10 Fig. 1-2, and parts that are the same or similar are

given the same reference numerals with the suffix "e" attached.

The cushion 10e includes a stuffed animal 32 located in the axial end 12e of the leg 16e.

5 Alternatively, the stuffed animal 32 may be located on the opposite axial end 14e of the leg 18e or a stuffed animal 32 may be located on each axial end of legs 16e and 18e respectively. The stuffed animal 32 may be sewn on to the cushion 10e or may be attached by other  
10 fasteners such as a button, snap connection, VELCRO™ or any other suitable fastener. The stuffed animal 32 may be permanently attached to the cushion 10e or may be detachable.

15 The stuffed animal 32 is only schematically illustrated as many different configurations of stuffed animals may be employed in the embodiment of Fig. 12. The stuffed animal 32 may be any suitable configuration including, but not limited to, the face of a panda bear or a webbed foot of a duck for example. Other examples  
20 include the wings of a butterfly or bird, a whale or fish, a dog, a cat or any other animal. Numerous configurations of the stuffed animal 32 are contemplated which are intended to be within the spirit and scope of the present invention.

Fig. 13 is a schematic illustration of a seventh embodiment of the child's car seat cushion 50 according to the present invention. The cushion 50 is similar to the cushion 10 except that cushion 50 is smaller in size. The cushion 50 has a length which is approximately one-third the length of cushion 10. The cushion 50 also has a smaller thickness or diameter compared to the cushion 10.

The cushion 50 is made from the same materials as the cushion 10 and has the same overall construction. The cushion 50 has the same flexibility as cushion 10 and can be moved from a linear shape (similar to cushion 10 illustrated in Fig. 9) to an upside down U-shape for insertion into a car seat. Alternatively, cushion 50 can also be manufactured as a preformed U-shaped structure.

The upside down U-shaped cushion 50 has two legs 56, 58 extending an approximately equal distance. The two legs 56, 58 extend from a base portion 60 where the two legs are joined together. The cushion 50 is intended to be placed into a car seat between the cushion 10 and the infant. Fig. 14 is a schematic illustration of an infant with a cushion 10 and a cushion 50 according to the present invention.

The head of a smaller size infant may be spaced apart from the cushion 10 while the infant is seated in the car seat. The extra space may allow the infant's head to slouch deeply to one side which may negatively affect breathing. The extra space may also allow the infant's head to flop back and forth from side to side.

5 The head of the infant engages the cushion 50 to support the head. The cushion 50 occupies the extra space around the infant's head to prevent the head from

10 slouching and flopping.

Fig. 15 is a schematic illustration of three child's car seat cushions according to the present invention including an eighth embodiment of a child's car seat cushion 70. The cushion 70 is similar to the cushion 50 except that the cushion 70 is longer in length and is smaller in diameter than the cushion 50.

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The cushion 70 is flexible and can be moved from a linear shape similar to cushion 50 to an upside down U-shape for insertion into a car seat. Alternatively, cushion 70 can also be manufactured as a preformed U-shaped structure. The cushion 70 has two legs extending an approximately equal distance. The two legs 76,78 extend from a base portion 80 where the two legs are joined together.

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Fig. 16 is a schematic illustration of an infant positioned with the three child's car seat cushions 10, 50 and 70 respectively, of Fig. 15. The upside down U-shaped cushion 70 is intended to be placed into a car seat between the cushion 50 and a premature infant. The head of the premature infant may be spaced apart from the cushion 10 and cushion 50 which may result in the head slouching or flopping back and forth from side to side. The cushion 70 occupies the empty space around the premature infant's head so that the head engages the cushion 70 to help prevent the head from flopping back and forth and slouching.

The shoulders and sides of the infant's body may also be spaced apart from the cushion 10. The lack of side support and shoulder support may cause the infant to slouch or slump over. The cushion 70 is longer than cushion 50 so that cushion 70 extends down past the shoulders of the infant and approximately to the elbows. The cushion 70 is slightly deformed by the infant to hug the shoulders of the infant. Thus, the cushion 70 provides shoulder and side support for the premature infant and supports and secures the infant to help prevent slouching and slumping of the infant's body as well as the infant's head.

Fig. 17 is a schematic illustration of three child's car seat cushions according to the present invention including a ninth embodiment of a child's car seat cushion. The cushion 90 is similar to the cushion 70 except that the cushion 90 is longer in length.

Fig. 18 is a schematic illustration of an infant positioned with the three child's car seat cushions of Fig. 17. The cushion 90 is longer than cushion 70 so that cushion 90 extends down past the shoulders of the infant and approximately to the hips. The cushion 90 is slightly deformed by the infant to hug the shoulders of the infant as well as the sides of the infant until approximately the hips. Thus, the cushion 90 provides shoulder and side support for the premature infant and supports and secures the body of the infant as well as the head of the infant to help prevent slouching and slumping of the infant.

The infant's arms may be positioned to the side of either the cushion 70 and the cushion 90 or above the cushion 70 and the cushion 90 and the cushions 70, 90 will still provide excellent support to the head and side of the premature infant's body.

Fig. 19 illustrates a tenth embodiment of the invention. The cushion 10f is similar to the cushion

10 Fig. 1-2, and parts that are the same or similar are given the same reference numerals with the suffix "f" attached.

The cushion 10f includes a portion 98 of each leg which is reduced in thickness/diameter relative to the thickness/diameter of the remainder of the cushion 10f. The reduced thickness portions 98 of the cushion 10f are located relative to the child along a distance approximately between the child's temples and chin. The reduced thickness portions 98 allow for a larger empty space between the child's temples and chin and the cushion 10f in order to help the child to breathe easier if, for example, the child turns its head in the left or right directions. The top of the child's head is in contact with the base of the cushion to provide support to the child's head to help the child's head to face in a forward direction. Similar to the cushion 10, cushion 10f contact the entire lateral sides of the infant and conforms to the shape of the infant. Fig. 20 illustrates the cushion 10f and child shown in Fig. 19 placed into a car seat 100.

From the above description of the invention, those skilled in the art will perceive improvements, changes and modifications. For example, the infant can be

placed into the car seat 100 either before the cushion 10 is placed into the car seat or after the cushion is placed into the car seat. The cushion 10 is flexible enough to allow adjustments to its position in the car seat 100 by a care giver with the infant already placed into the car seat before the cushion is placed into the car seat. Such improvements, changes and modifications within the skill of the art are intended to be covered by the appended claims.